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# PFLAG Edmonton

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April 1997

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## MEETINGS:

### SUPPORT MEETING

Tuesday, April 15, 1997

7:30 pm

Suite 103, 10612 - 124 St.

We welcome the parents of lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgendered children, these children (any age), and their family members, friends and other supportive persons.

Coffee and baked goods will be served.

### **Business Meeting**

Tuesday, May 6, 1997

For more information or to talk to a PFLAG parent please call:

voice box 3524 from 7:00 - 9:30 pm weekdays or....

Call \_\_\_\_\_ynne or \_\_\_\_\_ Ellen and leave a message.

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

## LESBIAN & GAY POSITIVE SPACE



This is a place where human rights are respected, and where gays, lesbians, bisexuals, their friends and allies are welcomed and supported.

### SPEAKERS BUREAU

#### **"Family" Approach Succeeds**

At the suggestion of the Planned Parenthood Education Director many of our PFLAG speakers have been making their presentations with two or more family members, e.g. a mother, father and sister of a gay son/brother; a mother and a transgendered daughter; a mother and a transgendered son; and a mother and a gay son.

These presentations to teachers, counsellors and other educators; to students of social work, nursing, criminology, sociology, psychology, etc. have proven to be more beneficial to their audiences in understanding les/bi/gay/trans people as members of a family - as we all are.

We applaud all those who have participated and also encourage others who feel comfortable speaking with one or more of their family members to contact the Speakers Bureau at 465-3057 or 462-5958. Thankyou.

Presentations in March included:

- Central East Alberta Teachers Assoc.
- Gay Pride Awareness week
- University of Alberta, Human Ecology class
- Red Cross Volunteers

The Speakers Bureau thanks the Gay and Lesbian Community Centre and the Metropolitan Community Church for their enthusiastic support of, and participation in, presentations.

Please share this newsletter







### A PARENT ISSUE:

#### TO ASK, OR NOT TO ASK?

(Courtesy of S.F.PFLAG via Vancouver PFLAG)

S.F. PFLAG has ... an e-mail address to which a mom recently wrote with the following question, "About 3 months ago our 23yr old son, the oldest of 4, came out to us. We feel that this improved a relationship that had been strained for years.

**We suspect that our second son, age 21, is also gay. Should we ask him or just hope that he will be able to approach us about it soon?"**

S.F. PFLAG posted this question on the Internet (pflag-talk) with the mom's permission. Below are only two of many excellent responses:

#### Two Gay Sons

I have two gay sons. We found out about our oldest son when he was 15 years old.

We come from a conservative Southern Baptist background and were very indoctrinated in our beliefs. There was no PFLAG to attend 16 years ago, and we struggled alone for 12 years. It took us approximately 2 years after our son told us, to fully understand, and that understanding was gained through books written by some

wonderful people. "Now That You Know" by Fairchild and Hayward was a great source of help.

We went through the normal process of thinking that once he met the right person, it would all go away. But it didn't go away, and the pressure we put on our son to "change" was more than he could handle. Therefore, he ran away from home at the age of 15. He was gone for approximately one year, an unbearably long time, which I will never forget.

**You see, we thought what our church had told us all our lives was correct.. We thought our son could change. We thought what he was telling us was a sin. But learning about our son has changed us, not our son. He is okay the way he is. It is society that needs to change..**

We slowly began to think for ourselves and question what our church was telling us. We have since left the Southern Baptist Church. We have a wonderful relationship with both of our sons and I would not trade that relationship for anything.

Our youngest son came out to us approximately seven years ago, when he was a senior in college. We had suspected it for several years before he came out. We did not question him, but in retrospect, I wish I had, because he spent so very much time alone as a teenager. He has told us he used to pray every night

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asking God to make him straight. He had seen how we had struggled with learning about his older brother and had not wanted to add to that struggle. We were able to just hold him in our arms and say, "It does not matter, you are our son and we love you. You are still our "Davis".

No one should have to endure learning about their sexuality alone, and I so regret not taking that step to question him in some way, and being able to give him the support he needed.

We have one Mom in our PFLAG group who did approach her son. The way it occurred was as follows:

She and her son were talking one day while she was visiting him in Washington, D.C. He asked her what she was doing with her time at night after work. Was she still attending a support group that she had attended for many years? She told him, "No, I'm not going to that group anymore. I've become involved in another group." He said, "What group is that?" She said, "PFLAG. Have you ever heard of it?"

**He said, "Yes, why are you going to PFLAG?" (He later told her he thought she was going to tell him she is a lesbian.)**

**Her answer was, "Because I think you might be gay, and I want to be able to be supportive and understanding, because I love you.**

Also, I have felt our relationship has changed and you are distant from me. I don't want that to happen. I want to be a part of your life."

Needless to say he came out to his Mom and the strained relationship



is no longer strained. It is absolutely wonderful!

Maggie Candler, Co-pres,  
PFLAG Greenville, SC

### A Gay Son's Advice

I knew I was gay since about 12, but I was absolutely terrified that I might be rejected by my family and lose their love if I came out to them. I could not have handled that at all.

I knew my mom would probably be OK because she is a caring sensitive person who is friends with some gay people, but I also knew that a lot of people mouthed lip service about being gay friendly and if it came to a member of their own family then they might sing a different tune.

I went through agony during my teenage years, afraid of being found out and abandoned.

I finally came out to my mother over the phone when I was 22 because I couldn't bear to face what I imagined might be the look of rejection on her face. I was lucky, she was quite accepting and said she'd suspected it for years.

**I realize now that she didn't want to upset me by confronting me about it but God, I wish she had. I could have skipped those years and years worrying about rejection and knowing I was still loved.**

That's why I'm a huge believer in approaching your children and letting them know that you will still love them.

**I was very close to suicide several times when I was a teenager. This delay in letting me know I'd be accepted could have cost me my life and I don't want any other gay people to go through that horrible isolation or anyone to lose their child.**

Lyndon,  
Sydney, Australia



### SCHOOLS MUST BE SAFE PLACES

(Editorial in *Coquitlam Now*,  
Feb 15, 1997 courtesy Gale  
Force, March, 1997)

A glimpse of song and dance about evil and social injustice from the 1960's musical *Hair*...opened Tuesday's school board meeting. The short performance ...was particularly poignant because it asked how people can be so harsh, how people can have no feelings. They hit the right note for what much of the meeting was about.

It's now been well documented by the news media that Coquitlam teacher Murray Warren wants protection for gay and lesbian students and staff within the public school system, through policy and through educational programs.

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**What hasn't been documented is just how many teachers, principals, students and their parents are gay.**

And the reasons for that were evident at Tuesday's meeting where several teachers stood up in public, declared their homosexuality, and explained why they generally keep it a secret: **There is simply too much homophobia within the school system, and within our society, for them to feel safe anywhere but in the closet.**

The closet, as we know, is symbolic for invisibility. To come out of that closet, whether by choice or by discovery, means risking ridicule, verbal and physical attacks, and hatred. Enough personal stories have been told in public that pretending homophobia isn't a problem just won't work anymore.

Trustees are being asked to decide whether education against homophobia is as important as education against racism and sexism, or against people with any kind of difference or disability.

There's strong pressure from the gay community, people who have obviously suffered in silence for too long. And while there's support from many groups and individuals who are not gay but see this issue as a simple one of human rights, there's another group of people





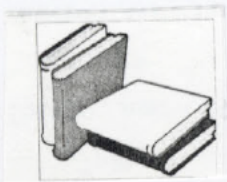
who seem to think this issue is about sex. It's not.

School Board chair Maxine Wilson ...acknowledged Warren is not talking about teaching homosexual sex (or any other kind of sex) in the classroom.

**Wilson also noted a desperate need for (teacher and administrative) staff training and education.**

What Murray Warren is asking for is a way to end life-destroying discrimination against homosexuals in schools. The only way to do that is with education.

We urge trustees to implement a frank and sensitive program. And we hope parents in this district understand why this program is needed and support it. There is no room for homophobia in our schools.



### **On the Bookshelf**

(Courtesy Gale Force,  
March 1997)

### **If the Sun Were Queer**

This online picture book for children with gay or lesbian parents is now available for viewing at the Open Prairie Syndicate web site:

[<http://www.visi.com/~oprairie/hover/book/book.html>](http://www.visi.com/~oprairie/hover/book/book.html)

It was inspired by the Sharon Bottoms travesty and cases in the US where children have been removed from or denied placement in a parent's or potential guardian's home because of the caretaker's sexual preference. The online picture book was written and illustrated by Joe Hoover, who has for more than seven years worked as a counsellor for children with emotional problems. Hoover is also a political cartoonist and the creator of the cartoon *The Open Prairie* which is published in 23 gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender publications nationwide. The Open Prairie Syndicate web site (online for more than a year) showcases cartoonists who work outside of the mainstream press.



### **Late Request Brings Out the Best**

Four days before the Red Cross two-day conference for their Abuse and Violence Prevention Team, PFLAG organizers were asked to put together a presentation which would give these speakers an understanding of the abuse and violence experienced by lesbians, bisexuals and gays in our Alberta schools. Is it not easier to treat the effects of abuse and violence - i.e. victim abuse of

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alcohol/drugs, low grades, dropping out of school, homelessness, and/or suicide attempts - if one knows the source of this abuse?

Fred Dicker, co-chair of the Gay and Lesbian Community Centre, and Rev. Bidwell of Metropolitan Community Church came to the rescue and within two hours had formed a team consisting of a lesbian couple and a gay couple (who are both in long-term stable relationships) with Rev Bidwell as moderator. Rev Bidwell sends us the following report on this two hour conference workshop:

### ***VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN SCHOOLS***

Ignorance leads to fear, fear leads to hatred and hatred leads to violence. It's a familiar pattern that the Red Cross workers on the Abuse and Violence Prevention Team are speaking to high school students about. They talk in schools about abuse and relationship violence, but until their instructor, Dennis Gane [REDACTED] read about a teenager committing suicide in an earlier issue of this newsletter, the plight of gay, lesbian and bisexual teens being violated in our heterosexist society had never entered his mind - or the curriculum for these workers.

One speaker told of feeling anger towards a relative who was showing affection to their same-sex "partner" at a family gathering. This speaker realized years later that they too were



homosexually oriented. The source of anger came from feeling uncomfortable in the presence of something not understood. They hated their own feelings and they hated anyone who expressed same-sex feelings. This internalized homophobia easily leads to violence and abuse.

**People who are comfortable with their own sexual feelings do not get upset by those who have different feelings and attractions - they consider them interesting in their difference, but not threatening.**

The workshop speakers were asked what parents and schools could do to help our homosexually oriented youth. They suggested that parents, and indeed all gay-positive adults, need to communicate to our youth that they are open to talking about same-sex feelings. This is easily done by responding to "jokes" which denigrate homosexually oriented people, by commenting that these jokes hurt both gay and gay-positive people's feelings. We never know when a gay or gay-positive person is present to hear the "joke" and be hurt.

Another suggestion was to have books, pamphlets and/or posters (available from PFLAG) affirming lesbian, bisexual and gay youth within view of all students, e.g. in the school library, in the counsellor's office, on a bulletin board or

display window, in student lounges, etc.

The best way the Red Cross volunteers can help the gay and lesbian youth in their audiences is to talk about the violence, denigration and rejection that many of these youth experience from their class-mates. Research shows that 4 out of every 5 persons harassed on the basis of their assumed sexual orientation are actually heterosexual but fit the "stereotype". Research by Dr. Christopher Bagley of the University of Calgary showed the attempted suicide rate for gay youth living in Calgary to be 14 times the rate for heterosexual youth living in the same area. Therefore we must get the message out to all youth that there are many happy, healthy, contributing les/bi/gay people in our society, including teachers, nurses, ministers, singers, sports stars, etc. They must also be informed that gay people have existed throughout history, respected and honored in many cultures, and that a same-sex orientation is a natural, inborn trait which probably evolved to ensure the survival of orphaned offspring of heterosexual parents who had lost their lives prematurely.

Thanks to this panel, and the PFLAG printed material which was handed out, these Red Cross volunteers on the Abuse and Violence Prevention Team are better prepared to do just that.

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### **EVENTS CALENDAR**

#### **GMOC**

#### **Planning & Events Meeting**

Tuesday, April 22, 1997

7:00 pm

AIDS Network

201 - 11456 Jasper Ave

#### **International Conference of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Educators**

August 18 & 19, 1997

Seattle, Washington, USA

Check for the latest  
information at  
[www.galebc.org](http://www.galebc.org)

Early registration: \$75 CDN

To register:

Phone (604) 469-2531

Fax (604) 469-2541

e-mail <[galebc@ibm.net](mailto:galebc@ibm.net)>

#### **Young, Loud & Proud**

#### **Second Annual Conference**

July 11 - 13, 1997

San Francisco

Phone Rachel (415) 703-6150  
for a workshop proposal form.

This conference is for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning youth, 25 years and under. Last year's conference drew 414 young people from the United States and Canada to the Bay Area for workshops, art exhibits and



performances, sports games, videos, networking and a dance. Large numbers of out-of-state attendants are expected.

### Weekly Events

#### Sunday:

- Arctic Frontrunners 10:00 am; Phone [REDACTED] Bill
- Lambda Christian Community Church 7:00pm Gameau United Church Phone 988-3913
- Metropolitan Community Church 7:15pm McDougall United Church. Ph 429-2321

#### Monday:

- OUTreach U of A based social and political organization. For details on times, locations and events. Phone [REDACTED]

#### Tuesday:

- Semi-competitive volleyball 7:00 - 9:30 pm; GMCC downtown campus. Phone [REDACTED]
- Group Movie Night: early show. Ph. [REDACTED] Kent
- Tactics House League (darts) Shakespear's Dart & Rumpus Room. Ph [REDACTED]

#### Wednesday:

- Recreational volleyball 6:30 - 8:30 pm. GMCC downtown. Phone [REDACTED]
- Gay Men's Coffee Evenings 7:30 pm Breadstick Cafe

(nonsmoking area) Phone [REDACTED]

- Gay & Lesbian Community Centre Movie Night 7:30 pm Ph. 488-3234 or 988-4018

#### Thursday:

### GAY RADIO ON CJSR 88.5 FM

- 5:30 - 6:00 pm Adamant Eve: Women's Radio Show
- 6:00 - Gaywire
- Note: Queeries is now broadcast at 5:00 - 5:30 pm every Wednesday.

#### Friday:

- Recreational Badminton: 6:30 - 9:30 pm Oliver School, 10210 - 117 Street Phone [REDACTED] Frank

#### Saturday:

- Northern Titians 10 pin bowling. 5:00 pm. Pins & Cues, Westmount Shopping Mall. Phone [REDACTED] Kent

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### INFORMATION LINES

Out & Out	988-3132
GLCCE	988-4018
GMOC	988-3671
EVM	988-4620
PYTE	906-6221
OUTreach	[REDACTED]
Gaylines	[REDACTED]
PFLAG	[REDACTED]

### *Morningside*

### *Bed & Breakfast*

"Your Home Away from Home"  
with hosts Dick and Cindy Ryley

1645 Carmi Ave

Penticton, B.C.

Phone 604-492-5874



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# It's a Gay Life!

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## FROM HERE & THERE

### Chat With Tom?

(Courtesy The GALA  
Occasion Feb, 1997)

Sheffield, England. **"Fancy a chat with Tom?"**

That's the teaser line in an ad placed by the South Yorkshire police department, in an effort to recruit gay men as cops. "About five per cent of the region's officers are gay", Sgt. John Roper said, but officials want to increase that figure.

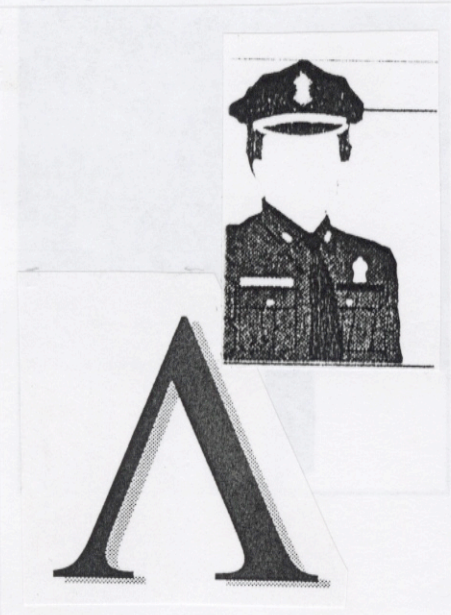
**Gays make good cops because they have greater sympathy for people who are suffering," he said, "and can handle difficulties. There are many more gays in society than three or five per cent," he added, "and the police service should mirror society."**

### "Coming Out" Invitation

(Courtesy Western Catholic Reporter, March 24, 1997)

Detroit, USA. Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit has urged gay priests

and bishops as well as lay people to "come out." "I hold



that within our church every gay person, every lesbian person, every bisexual person or transgendered person will come out, because that is how our church is going to truly change," he said at a national U.S. symposium on ministry to gay and lesbian Catholics, March 8, 1997. "I would say this especially to bishops and priests within our church," he added. "I can't tell you the number of letters that I have received in the last few years from priests who say they are

gay but who are afraid to come out. What a loss that is to our (Catholic) church."

### COMMENT

(Courtesy The GALA  
Occasion, March, 1997)

### Alberta Election Not a Total Disaster

Ralph Klein's hasn't become Canada's right-wing hero for championing gay rights. Or any human rights issues, for that matter.

Still, his government's re-election earlier this month wasn't a complete disaster for our community. There were some gains.

First of all, former cabinet minister Diane Mirosh -- who denied our rights early in Klein's first term - chose to retire. Second, her much more moderate successor, Gary Mar, was re-elected and will likely continue as education minister..

Third, rights-supportive Liberals like Gary Dixon were returned to office. Alberta Liberals are on record in



favor of equal rights for lesbians and gays. And fourth, highly vocal New Democrat leader Pam Barrett and a colleague were also elected. If anybody's going to stand up and make a noise when lesbian and gay Albertans are threatened, Barrett will. Now about those federal Liberals...

### **Discrimination That Dare Not Speak Its Name**

Recently the former minister of Alberta Family and Social Services, Stockwell Day, decided that "out" lesbian and gay parents can no longer be foster parents. As Murray Billett pointed out, what about families where a foster brother or a foster uncle is openly homosexual? Are they barred?

Stockwell Day, and his successor, Lyle Oberg, claim this decision "stems from a common-sense approach to decision making." As Mark Lisac of *The Province* points out "How real can a decision be when no one can point to any document (or research) that records it, aside from a vague reference to 'non-traditional families?'" There is no evidence of any record inside the government.

Mark Lisac continues, "We are dealing here with a policy based on whispers - the

discrimination that dare not speak its name.

How real can it be when no one has produced evidence that same-sex couples have damaged the lives of any foster child? When there is no indication that more than one same-sex couple in the province has even applied for foster children?...

**You can presume that the round-about procedure has something to do with legal concerns - a fear of losing a human rights case. (Delwin Vriend)**

Right now we have (two) ministers imposing their personal views, in a murky way, on grounds of obscure criteria like "highest potential for stability". There is little real and honest about this policy.

Editors Note: It is interesting that "historically" the purpose of gay couples in human society was to raise any orphaned children. We see this in the animal world too, e.g. when a young penguin is orphaned a same-sex "bonded" pair take over the raising of this orphan.

**How has this natural adaptation for survival become a moral issue?**

## **It's a Gay Life!**

... and on the Internet...

(Courtesy Graham Watts)

**New South Wales, Aust.** It surprises me to learn that Alberta hasn't passed legislation protecting the rights of homosexuals. Every state in Australia, with the exception of Tasmania, where homosexuality is still a criminal offense, now has legislation that protects us from discrimination. In New South Wales we even have Ant-vilification protection. However, we are still fighting for full equal rights, legal recognition of same-sex relationships and many other 'basic rights'.... Thanks for the information on Alberta's government. I hadn't realized that the Bible belt reached up into Canada. I guess we have a picture here of Canada being a more liberal, progressive country than we are. ...next year the New South Wales State Schools will have homosexuality as part of the curriculum - with the aim of educating the kids that 'gay-bashing' is not acceptable. Homophobic violence is still a problem here and the government have finally realized that children need to be educated about the subject and shown that violence is not an acceptable reaction. Chairman, Hunter Valley Lesbian & Gay Interagency, NSW, Mar, 1997